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Latin America Review

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LATIN AMERICA REVIEW

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4 January 1979

CONTENTS

Cuba-US: Castro's Revolution Anniversary

Speech [REDACTED] 1

President Fidel Castro used his 1 January speech to deliver his strongest condemnation of the US since the Carter administration took office. [REDACTED]

Ecuador: Blows to Army's Power [REDACTED] . . 3

The recent dismissals of Minister of Government Jarrin and of the head of the national police strengthen the hand of President Poveda and others who favor a return to civilian rule next year. [REDACTED]

Jamaica: New Marxist Party [REDACTED] . . . 5

The new radical party launched last month will provide a forum for Marxist views that have become increasingly unpopular in the ruling party, but it will not have a significant impact on the political situation. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Cuba-US: Castro's Revolution Anniversary Speech



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1, 2

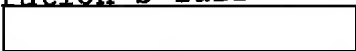
President Fidel Castro used his 1 January speech commemorating the 20th anniversary of the "Triumph of the Cuban Revolution" to deliver his strongest condemnation of the US since the Carter administration took office. The harshness of Castro's rhetoric, reflecting his frustration over what he sees as Washington's failure to respond to his friendly gestures during the last several months, indicates that Castro has all but written off the possibility of improved relations in the near term. Castro refrained from criticizing President Carter personally, however, and was careful to leave open the door for eventual normalization of relations.



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1, 2

Castro has been aware for some time that Cuba faces a period of prolonged austerity unless it can sell its major export products--sugar and nickel--to the US. The importance of the US market to Cuba has been underscored by poor prospects of the world sugar market for the foreseeable future, Cuba's reduced access to its large, traditional, sugar markets in Japan and Spain, and its limited success in finding hard currency markets for expanding nickel exports, particularly nickel sulfide slurry. Havana's hopes that the economic embargo would be lifted to allow access to the US market has been the chief motive behind its recent human rights gestures to the US, and Castro was particularly bitter about the Carter administration's failure to respond positively on this issue.



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1, 2

Castro's biting remarks about the decision to normalize US-Chinese relations arise from his awareness that Beijing (Peking) now stands to take advantage of an economic relationship with the US that is denied to Cuba. Castro emphasized, however, that Cuba--unlike China--will not abandon its revolutionary principles to obtain the benefits of commercial relations with the US. He also blasted the West for trying to use China against the USSR.



25X1

4 January 1979

SECRET

1, 2 Castro's statements indicated that he apparently sees no opportunity in the near future for diminishing Cuba's military presence in Africa. He made no mention of local conditions that might allow a reduction of Cuban troops in Ethiopia or Angola. He implied, in fact, that Cuba will continue to stand ready to help its friends in Africa and elsewhere by saying that Cuba will be "unflinchingly loyal" to its "revolutionary obligations." [REDACTED]

1, 2 Having used many of the bargaining chips available to him in dealing with the US, and unwilling to alter his policy of military involvement in Africa to accommodate Washington, Castro seemed reduced to trying to shame the Carter administration into making concessions. Castro contrasted his government's accomplishments in overcoming Cuba's social ills with the failure of US-supported regimes elsewhere in Latin America to redress these problems. He accused the US of trying to impose its "rotten and hypocritical pseudo-democracy" on Latin America and implied that the US was responsible for thousands of deaths there as a result of helping to bring allegedly repressive regimes to power. [REDACTED]

3 In a related event, the military parade on 2 January displayed weapons that contribute both to Cuba's defense and to its military commitments abroad. The parade of mobile and amphibious weapons, engineering equipment, and personnel transport illustrated the growth of the concept of mobility in the Cuban armed forces, and was highlighted by the first public showing of MI-8 armed helicopters and a unit of naval infantry. The anticipated fly-by of swing-wing MIG-23 fighter-bombers took place but could not be seen because of low clouds. A television documentary shown on the same day made a point of saying that all Cuban military equipment has been provided free by the USSR. The commentator valued the equipment provided since 1959 at several billion dollars. [REDACTED]

4 January 1979

SECRET

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Ecuador: Blows to Army's Power

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1 The recent dismissals of Minister of Government
2 Jarrin and the head of the national police are serious
3 blows to the political power and influence of the Army
4 and of Army General Luis Duran, a member of the Supreme
Council of Government. The dismissals strengthen the
hand of President Poveda and others who favor a return
to civilian rule next year and appear to make the Navy
the ascendant military service.

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4 When the present ruling three-man Supreme Council
was formed in January 1976, Admiral Poveda was made head
of state--he is the only naval officer in Latin America
serving in this capacity. Duran did not get the post in
part because he was widely mistrusted by his fellow Army
officers and, since that time, Duran has plotted relent-
lessly not only to overthrow Poveda but also to thwart
the promised return to constitutional government.

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The appointment of Victor Garces, a Navy admiral
and an intimate of Poveda, as Minister of Government--
together with the abrupt nature of Jarrin's dismissal,
his reassignment to an obscure position in the Army's
personnel department, and the Navy's effective assump-
tion of control over the country's 12,000-man police
force--points to the Army's declining fortunes.

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The Supreme Council has ordered Garces to carry out
a thorough investigation of the assassination. The probe
could produce damning information against other general
officers, including Duran. It seems unlikely, however,

4 January 1979

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that Duran will actually be dropped from the Council because he publicly vowed several months ago to retire from active duty when the new civilian government assumes office next August.

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4 January 1979

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Jamaica: New Marxist Party

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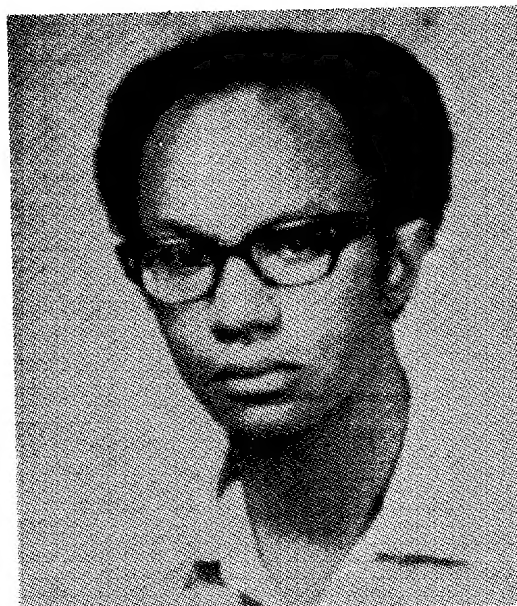
5 A new radical party launched in Jamaica last month will provide a forum for Marxist views that have become decreasingly popular in the ruling People's National Party (PNP) and will offer a refuge for PNP leftists disenchanted with Prime Minister Manley's growing political moderation. The new party's ambitious leader, Trevor Munroe, will also try to unify radical groups across the Caribbean and tighten their links with Cuba and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the new party will not be able to win a Jamaican election or have a significant impact on government policy for the foreseeable future.

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Background

5 Munroe has initiated his Workers' Party of Jamaica (WPJ) in a period of eclipse for local radicals, who have generally supported Manley during his nearly seven years in office. Munroe would probably prefer to continue the cooperative relationship with Manley while further failures of moderate policies work to the radicals' advantage. The young leftist leader apparently fears, however, that ruling party moderates will force Manley to ease his longstanding ties with the left.

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Trevor Munroe

5 Although the Prime Minister has carried out reforms approved by the left and has remained sympathetic to the radicals, the serious deterioration of the

4 January 1979

SECRET

island's economy--and the USSR's refusal to provide aid--have impelled him in the past year to backtrack on social programs and to impose harsh austerity measures. Nearly all of Manley's once-influential radical advisers have been displaced by moderates committed to a tough three-year agreement with the International Monetary Fund that has saved the government from collapse. [REDACTED]

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Munroe's party has announced conditional support for Manley, and the Prime Minister has publicly hailed it as a progressive force, but his relations with the left are obviously cooling. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Munroe, for his part, has sternly warned the Prime Minister that the left will desert him if he continues to yield to pressure from the moderates. [REDACTED]

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The new party is a threat to Manley primarily because it could siphon off the left wing of the PNP--a development that would greatly embarrass the Prime Minister. We have no evidence, however, that any of the prominent radicals still in the ruling party are yet to exchange this job security for the ideological integrity offered by Munroe. [REDACTED]

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The Founder of the WPJ

The 33-year-old Munroe is a university professor whose mixing of radical politics with scholarly research has apparently hurt his reputation in both fields. Like most leading Jamaican radicals, Munroe is a child of privilege--the son of a prominent jurist. Jesuit-educated in Jamaica, Munroe won a Rhodes fellowship that enabled him to complete a major study of Jamaica's political system at Oxford in the late 1960s. [REDACTED]

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When he returned home, Munroe turned quickly to leftist politics and gradually allowed Marxist polemics to pervade his published works. Munroe's organizations--a university-based union formed in 1972, and a political association that laid the groundwork for his new radical party--have never mobilized a significant following. Munroe's stature has risen largely because of Manley's protection and not because of any appreciable mass support. [REDACTED]

25X1

4 January 1979

6
SECRET

[REDACTED]

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Despite his weak political performance to date, Munroe still has ambitions to replace Manley as the leader of the Jamaican left and to unite Caribbean radical groups.

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[REDACTED]

Although he has apparently exaggerated his local and international reputation, Munroe has managed to attract Soviet, Cuban, and numerous other Caribbean delegates to the inauguration of his new party. It is clear, moreover, that he will work energetically to increase Cuban and Soviet influence among the disparate radical groups in the region.

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Prospects

5 Munroe may well become a nuisance for Manley and the Workers' Party could become a rallying point for Caribbean radicals isolated from political power. He will probably increase his small following among disaffected youth--60 percent of Jamaica's population is under 21 and 50 percent under 16. Nonetheless, the new party will not become a major political force for the foreseeable future.

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1, 2 5 Despite his high profile during Manley's rule, Munroe commands a following probably no larger than 1,000 among a generally conservative electorate of over 800,000. Moreover, the WPJ will make little headway against the two major parties, which are based on unions that control about 98 percent of organized labor and that have excluded all other parties from parliament since its establishment in 1944. Munroe has never contested a Jamaican election and his abortive effort to woo port workers away from the major unions in 1974 resulted in violence in which Munroe himself was seriously injured.

25X1

4 January 1979

SECRET

In breaking with Manley, therefore, Munroe would also have much to lose for the sake of Marxist principles. As a political historian, he is aware that minor parties have a record of dismal failure in Jamaica. Twenty-one minor parties--including two previous leftist groups inaugurated with as much early fanfare as the WPJ--have accumulated only about one percent of the total vote in 17 general elections under universal suffrage.

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